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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the demographic and socioeconomic patterns of 7 Mexican-origin and U.S.-born subgroups living in 13 midwestern states in 1990. Mexican-born immigrants are categorized into five subgroups based on the period of U.S. entry: pre-1965, 1965-74, 1975-81, 1982-86, and 1987-90. U.S.-born Mexican Americans (as well as those born abroad to U.S. citizens) are classified into two subgroups: born in the Midwest and born elsewhere. The final analysis compares Mexican immigrants in the Midwest who came to the United States between 1980 and 1990 with those living in other regions of the country. Data are from the 1990 Public Use Microdata Samples of the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Analyses examine population size, geographic distribution among the 12 states, rural versus urban residence, age and sex structure, percent U.S. citizenship, percent speaking English well or very well, percent high school graduates, unemployment, occupational level, income, and percent of families in poverty. Among the findings are: (1) most Mexican immigrants in the Midwest lived in Illinois (particularly Chicago) or in other metropolitan areas; (2) immigrant groups showed a straight-line increase in assimilation (U.S. citizenship and English language proficiency) with length of time in the United States; (3) educational attainment varied widely, but the least educated groups were immigrants arriving since 1975; and (4) the two earliest Mexican-origin immigrant groups were better off socioeconomically than the other groups, including U.S.-born Mexican Americans. Contains 26 references and 2 large data tables. (SV)

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The Demography of Mexicans in the Midwest

by: Rogelio Saenz

From *Immigration and Ethnic Communities: A Focus on Latinos*

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The Demography of Mexicans in the Midwest

Rogelio Saenz

Among the various major non-Anglo racial and ethnic groups in the United States, the Latino population grew the most rapidly in absolute numbers between 1980 and 1990, gaining more than 7.7 million persons. The Latino population growth rate of 53 percent over the 1980s was more than five times that of the U.S. population as a whole. Of the approximate 22.2 million growth in the U.S. population between 1980 and 1990, about 35 percent was accounted for by the Latino population. Population projections show this rapid growth continuing, so that by 2010, Latinos are likely to replace African-Americans as the largest minority group in the country (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1992).

Of the three major Latino groups in the nation — Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban — the Mexican-origin population with a population of approximately 13.5 million (or three-fifths of all Latinos) is the largest and the fastest growing (increasing by 54.4 percent during the 1980s). The rapid growth of the Mexican population is due largely to its young age structure, its high fertility rate, and its continual flows of legal and illegal immigrants (Bean and Tienda 1987, Saenz and Greenlees 1996).

While about 83 percent of the U.S. Mexican population lived in the Southwest in 1990, there are significant clusters residing elsewhere in the United States, with the Midwest being the most popular location outside of the Southwest.

Mexicans began arriving in the Midwest in sizable numbers early in the 20th century, especially during the 1920s when they ventured to the region to work in agriculture, railroads, and factories (Acuna 1988; Saenz 1991, 1993; Valdes 1991). The Mexican population moving to the Midwest at this time filled labor voids created by the passage of the National Origins Quota Acts of 1921 and 1924, which restricted the flow of Southern and Eastern Europeans who provided cheap labor for U.S. labor markets (Dinnerstein, Nichols, and Reimers 1990, Easterlin et al. 1982, Montejano 1987, Saenz 1993). Today, the Midwest continues to be a popular destination for Mexicans leaving the Southwest, as well as for Mexican immigrants (Saenz 1991).

Over the last decade, large-scale immigration to the United States has stirred up major debates (Donato 1994, Portes and Rumbaut 1990). Much anti-immigrant sentiment has been directed at Mexicans, the largest group of immigrants. Historically, during economic recessionary periods, immigrants have been marked as convenient scapegoats responsible for economic ills (McLemore 1991). During the late 1970s and 1980s, the Midwest experienced dramatic economic downturns associated with the Farm Crisis (Albrecht and Murdock 1990, Bultena, Lasley, and Geller 1986, Murdock et al. 1986) and the loss of manufacturing jobs (Knudsen 1992, Saenz 1994). Under such conditions, minorities and immigrants become economically vulnerable because of their limited human capital (e.g., education, skills, and training) and labor-market discrimination (Jensen and Tienda 1989, Saenz and Thomas 1990).

Analytical Plan

In light of the anti-immigrant sentiments that have intensified over the last decade, along with the major economic changes in the Midwest, this chapter examines the demographic and socioeconomic patterns of seven Mexican-origin immigrant and U.S.-born subgroups living in the Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) in 1990. Mexican-born immigrants are categorized into five subgroups based on the period of U.S. entry — pre-1965; 1965-1974; 1975-1981; 1982-1986; 1987-1990. U.S.-born Mexican Americans (as well as those born abroad to U.S.-citizen parents) are classified into two subgroups — born in the Midwest, born elsewhere). This classification allows us to discern the considerable diversity among the groups with respect to demographic and socioeconomic patterns.

The final part of the analysis compares Mexican immigrants in the Midwest who came to the United States between 1980 and 1990, with those living in other regions of the country [Northeast, South (excluding Texas), Southwest (Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas), and the rest of the West (excluding Arizona, California, Colorado, and New Mexico).

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Description of Data

The data are from the 1990 Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993b). The PUMS data represent a 5 percent individual-based sample of the U.S. population. These individual-based data allow researchers to undertake unique analyses not possible with the aggregate data widely available in printed form or in the various Summary Tape Files (STFs). The PUMS data set contains person weights which are used in the analysis to obtain estimates of the population from the sample.

Results

Table 1 reports the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the five Mexican immigrant and two U.S.-born groups in the Midwest. About 1.1 million persons of Mexican-origin lived in the Midwest in 1990, with approximately 68 percent being U.S.-born and close to 32 percent being immigrants. By far, the largest subgroup consists of U.S.-born persons born in the Midwest—596,223 or nearly 53 percent of all persons of Mexican-origin in the region. About one-fifth of all Mexicans in the Midwest were immigrants who entered the United States since 1975.

The various segments of the midwestern Mexican population differ in their geographic distribution patterns. For instance, the majority of immigrants, especially those arriving since 1965, were located in Illinois. In contrast, the majority of U.S.-born Mexicans lived outside of Illinois. Still, three-fifths of those born in the Midwest lived in Illinois and Michigan, while nearly two-thirds of those born in other parts of the United States resided in Illinois, Michigan, Kansas, and Ohio.

Immigrant groups are more likely to be found in metropolitan areas (at least 90 percent across the different categories). In contrast, U.S.-born persons born outside of the Midwest were the least metropolitan (70.2 percent). (The "mixed" category in Table 1 includes both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas to form a county group with at least 100,000 persons.)

The strongest Midwest concentration of Mexican immigrants is in the Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), where from 66 percent to 71 percent of the cohorts arriving in this country since 1965 made their home. On the other hand, only 19 percent of U.S.-born persons born outside of the Midwest were located in the Chicago MSA in 1990.

The seven groups differ significantly in their age structures. Of course, no one in the two earliest groups of immigrants was under 15 years. Slightly more than one-fourth of immigrants who arrived before 1965 were 65 years or older. The U.S.-born group born in the Midwest had the youngest age structure, with nearly 54 percent being younger than 15. Close to one-fourth of the most recent immigrants (those arriving between 1987 and 1990) and U.S.-born persons born outside of the Midwest were less than 15 years of age.

The sex distribution of immigrants reflects the typical structure of foreign-born groups that include undocumented immigrants (Davila and Saenz 1990). Indeed, each immigrant group had a high sex ratio (number of males per 100 females), with the highest (176.2 males per 100 females) associated with those who arrived between 1982 and 1986. The U.S.-born groups, in contrast, had more balanced sex distributions.

The immigrant groups exhibit an increasing assimilation pattern with respect to citizenship status and English proficiency, with the rates of both variables rising in a straight line from the most recent to the earliest group of arrivals. These findings call into question the assumptions often made about Mexican immigrants concerning their supposed lack of desire to integrate into the host society (see Dinnerstein, Nichols and Reimers 1990).

There is a substantial amount of variation in the educational attainment levels of the different groups. U.S.-born Mexicans born outside of the Midwest represent the most educated group, with two-fifths of persons 25 and older being high school graduates. This could reflect the process in which migration is selective of the more educated segment of a given group (Saenz 1991; Shaw 1975). The least educated were those immigrants arriving in the United States since 1975, followed by U.S.-born persons born in the Midwest.

In general, the socioeconomic patterns (i.e., unemployment, average hourly wage, and percent of families in poverty) indicate that U.S.-born persons occupy a middle position between the most recent groups of immigrants (those arriving since 1975) at the bottom of the distribution and earlier immigrants (those coming before 1975) at the top. This pattern counters the predictions of assimilationists (Gordon 1964) who suggest that U.S.-born

Table 1. Selected Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Mexican-Origin Population in the Midwest by Immigrant and Native Groups, 1990.

	Immigrant Groups by Period of Entry into U.S.					*Native-Born by Region of Birth*	
	Pre1965	*1965-74*	*1975-81*	*1982-86*	*1987-90*	*Midwest*	*Other U.S.*
Population Size:							
Total population	41,521	77,595	111,891	63,819	63,023	596,223	173,995
Pct. Distribution	3.7%	6.9%	9.9%	5.7%	5.6%	52.9%	15.4%
Geographic Patterns:							
State % distribution							
Illinois	65.5%	82.6%	84.2%	79.2%	82.0%	45.5%	28.9%
Indiana	8.4%	3.8%	1.9%	1.6%	1.8%	6.9%	7.9%
Iowa	1.5%	0.6%	1.4%	1.0%	1.2%	2.8%	2.7%
Kansas	4.5%	2.6%	3.8%	5.9%	4.4%	7.2%	9.1%
Michigan	9.0%	3.6%	2.2%	4.7%	3.2%	14.8%	18.4%
Missouri	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	1.6%	1.6%	3.4%	5.1%
Minnesota	2.4%	1.2%	1.0%	1.0%	1.5%	4.0%	5.7%
Nebraska	1.3%	0.6%	1.2%	1.7%	0.7%	3.0%	4.6%
North Dakota	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%	1.0%
Ohio	2.9%	1.6%	0.6%	0.9%	0.7%	5.9%	9.0%
South Dakota	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.8%
Wisconsin	3.5%	2.6%	3.0%	2.4%	3.0%	5.9%	6.8%
Type of Residence (% Distribution):							
Metro	89.6%	93.0%	93.5%	89.6%	92.0%	81.7%	70.2%
Mixed	3.6%	1.8%	1.7%	2.6%	2.4%	6.3%	8.9%
Nonmetro	6.8%	5.2%	4.8%	7.9%	5.6%	12.0%	20.9%
% in Chicago MSA	53.9%	69.0%	71.3%	66.0%	68.4%	35.0%	19.2%
Age/Sex Structure:							
% less than 15	0.0%	0.0%	7.8%	15.4%	23.6%	53.6%	21.8%
% 65 and older	26.5%	2.1%	0.9%	1.0%	1.4%	1.3%	5.4%
Sex ratio	114.4	137.4	138.0	176.2	135.0	101.2	103.9
Ethnic Patterns:							
%U.S. citizen	55.0%	33.9%	24.1%	16.6%	9.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% speaking English well or very well	75.7%	67.0%	60.6%	46.3%	36.6%	96.8%	94.5%
Educational Patterns:							
% of 25 and older high school grads.	38.2%	33.2%	24.3%	25.3%	22.9%	28.0%	40.1%
Labor Force Patterns:							
% civilian labor force unemployed	7.7%	10.0%	10.1%	8.7%	13.9%	11.2%	10.6%
Occupational % distribution:							
Mgr. and Professional	12.7%	5.8%	3.7%	3.2%	3.2%	12.5%	12.4%
Tech., Sales, Adm.	19.0%	15.9%	10.1%	7.5%	9.6%	33.0%	22.8%
Service	14.4%	14.5%	18.7%	25.0%	26.2%	18.8%	19.0%
Farm, Forest, Fisheries	3.0%	3.2%	4.4%	7.8%	9.0%	1.5%	3.7%
PPC & R[a]	15.2%	16.1%	15.3%	15.9%	12.3%	11.1%	12.5%
Fab., oper., labor[b]	35.6%	44.6%	47.9%	40.6%	39.8%	23.1%	29.7%
Income and Poverty:							
Avg. Hourly Wage:							
Males	$14.70	$11.38	$8.81	$7.30	$6.40	$11.07	$12.00
Females	$9.25	$7.87	$6.86	$6.43	$5.68	$9.47	$8.28
% of families in poverty	9.0%	12.6%	19.6%	22.2%	28.7%	19.7%	18.1%

[a]Precision production, craft, and repairs
[b]Fabricator, operator, laborer

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 Public-Use Microdata Series.

persons enjoy superior socioeconomic levels. Immigrants coming in the 1987-1990 period had the highest unemployment rate (13.9 percent), lowest average hourly wages ($6.40 for males and $5.68 for females), and highest rates of family poverty (28.7 percent). In contrast, the group of immigrants arriving before 1965 had the lowest level of unemployment (7.7 percent), highest average hourly wages ($14.70 for males and $9.25 for females), and lowest poverty rate (9.0%).

With respect to occupational distributions, the two groups of U.S.-born persons and the earliest group of immigrants were the most likely to be employed in managerial and professional; and technical, sales, and administrative occupations. In contrast, approximately three-fourths of the immigrant groups arriving since 1982 were working in three occupations (service; farm, forestry, and fisheries; fabricator, operator, and laborer).

Thus, the statistics in Table 1 demonstrate the wide diversity among the Mexican-origin population in the Midwest. Obviously, it is not appropriate to treat immigrants or U.S.-born persons as a homogeneous group.

The Immigrants of the 1980-1990 Period

Table 2 reports characteristics of recent Mexican immigrants by where in the United States they were located in 1990. Most (82.3 percent or about 1.8 million) of the 2.2 million Mexican immigrants entering the United States between 1980 and 1990 resided in the Southwest. About one in 14 recent immigrants was located in the Midwest. Most likely to be living in metropolitan areas were those in the Northeast (96.9 percent), Southwest (93.2 percent), and Midwest (91.3 percent), while the rest were somewhat more likely to locate in nonmetropolitan areas — the South (19.0 percent) and the West (30.5 percent).

There were no significant regional differences in the age composition among immigrants. And the various regions were also relatively similar on the basis of citizenship and English proficiency patterns. However, in each region, there were significantly more males than females, with the sex ratio (number of males per 100 females) ranging from 129 in the Southwest to 207 in the South.

Recent immigrants in the Midwest were apparently slightly worse off socioeconomically (i.e., educational, employment, poverty rates, and average hourly wages for males) than those living in the Northeast, but substantially better off than those in the other regions, especially those in the Southwest and West. One exception is in the average hourly wage of Mexican immigrant women in the Midwest — $6.11, the lowest of all. Mexican immigrants in the Northeast had the highest educational level (29.3 percent of persons 25 and older were high school graduates), the second lowest unemployment rate (7.6 percent), highest average hourly wages ($10.08 for males and $6.85 for females), and the lowest poverty rate (23.9 percent of families). In contrast, those residing in the West and Southwest had the lowest educational levels (17.2 percent and 18.4 percent, respectively, of persons 25 and older were high school graduates), the highest unemployment rates (13.6 percent and 12.7 percent, respectively), and the highest poverty rates (37.8 percent and 36.9 percent, respectively), with males in the West having the lowest average hourly wage ($6.57), even lower than that of their female counterparts ($6.73).

In each of the five regions, most immigrants were employed in one of four occupations — services; farm, forestry, and fisheries; precision production, craft, and repairs; fabricator, operator, and laborer. Approximately two-thirds of the midwestern and northeastern recent immigrants worked in service occupations or in fabricator, operator, and laborer occupations. Larger shares of workers in the West (41.0 percent) and South (30.4 percent) were in farm, forestry, and fisheries occupations.

Table 2. Selected Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Mexican Immigrants Arriving in the United States in 1980-1990, by Region of Residence, 1990.

	Midwest	Northeast	South	Southwest	Other West
Population Size:					
Total Population	164,639	57,179	87,967	1,830,544	83,690
% Distribution	7.4%	2.6%	4.0%	82.3%	3.8%
Type of Residence (% Distribution):					
Metro	91.3%	96.9%	67.6%	93.2%	64.6%
Mixed	2.2%	2.4%	13.4%	1.9%	4.9%
Nonmetro	6.5%	0.8%	19.0%	4.9%	30.5%
Age/Sex Structure:					
% Less than 15	17.9%	13.9%	16.4%	19.4%	18.1%
% 65 and Older	1.1%	0.8%	0.6%	1.1%	0.5%
Sex Ratio	152.7	171.9	206.8	129.3	172.0
Ethnic Patterns:					
% U.S. Citizen	15.0%	12.2%	16.0%	12.5%	13.1%
% Speaking English Well or Very Well	45.1%	45.6%	47.8%	43.5%	48.0%
Educational Patterns:					
% of 25 and Older High School Graduates	24.3%	29.3%	20.3%	18.4%	17.2%
Labor Force Patterns:					
% Civilian Labor Force Unemployed	10.8%	7.6%	6.2%	12.7%	13.6%
Occupational % Distribution:					
Mgr. and Professional	3.2%	6.5%	4.5%	3.5%	2.0%
Tech., Sales, Admin.	8.8%	11.2%	6.6%	9.9%	5.6%
Service	24.1%	33.3%	17.8%	25.0%	21.9%
Farm, Forestry, Fisheries	7.4%	7.8%	30.4%	14.7%	41.0%
PPC & R[a]	15.0%	9.8%	15.2%	14.6%	7.7%
Fab., Oper., Labor[b]	41.6%	31.4%	25.5%	32.5%	21.8%
Income and Poverty:					
Avg. Hourly Wage					
Males	$7.19	$10.08	$7.10	$7.39	$6.57
Females	$6.11	$6.85	$6.38	$6.36	$6.73
% of Families in Poverty	24.5%	23.9%	32.8%	36.9%	37.8%

[a]Precision Production, Craft, and Repairs
[b]Fabricator, Operator, Laborer

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990 Public-Use Microdata Series.

Summary and Conclusions[1]

Today, U.S. immigrants from Mexico and U.S.-born persons of Mexican origin find themselves in various positions along the socioeconomic spectrum, depending on when they came, where they went, and in the case of their children, where they were born in the United States. This report compared various groups of midwestern immigrants, segmented by their time of entrance into the United States, with respect to their demographic and socioeconomic attributes. Those who came to the United States before 1975, and especially those arriving before 1965, were found to be in the most favorable socioeconomic position among all Mexican-origin groups. Contrary to predictions of assimilationists (Gordon 1964), these two earliest groups of immigrants are better off even than U.S.-born Mexicans. In contrast, the most recent cohorts of Mexican immigrants — those entering the country since 1975 — tend to occupy the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder.

These findings have important implications for programs and policies directed at improving the social and economic conditions of the Mexican-origin population. Programs designed to create jobs or alleviate poverty in the Midwest are most likely to be needed by recent immigrants, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, by U.S.-born individuals.

Another significant finding concerns the concentration of immigrants in Illinois, a state that has experienced substantial job reduction in the manufacturing sector. For example, while the Midwest had an 11 percent decline in manufacturing jobs between 1980 and 1990, Illinois experienced a 19 percent reduction (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1983, 1993a). In fact, of the nearly 1.5 million manufacturing jobs lost in the nation during the 1980s, the Midwest region accounted for approximately half of the nation's decline, with Illinois responsible for about 17 percent of the national loss. In such an economic setting, Mexican-origin persons are in a vulnerable position, as they witness low-wage, low-skilled jobs being exported to other places in the country and abroad. Thus, it is difficult to argue that the most recent immigrants will follow the same upward socioeconomic trend of the earlier cohorts of immigrants, who entered the country at a time when manufacturing jobs were expanding.

However, the results do show that immigrants arriving between 1980 and 1990 and settling in the Midwest tend to be better off socioeconomically than those located in other regions except the Northeast. Therefore, fewer resources may be required to improve the social and economic standing of this recent group of Mexican immigrants in the Midwest than will be needed in other regions of the country.

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[1] Due to the cross-sectional nature of the PUMS data, caution should be exercised when interpreting the variation of socioeconomic patterns across the different groups. For example, statistical results for the earliest cohorts of immigrants — and for other groups for that matter — are based on "survivors," thus excluding people who have died or moved elsewhere. Hence, the superior socioeconomic position of the earliest groups of immigrants in 1990 may be biased by a potential negative selectivity among earlier immigrants who are no longer in the Midwest. Another problem is that U.S.-born groups contain persons of all ages and generations, thus influencing their demographic and socioeconomic patterns. Unfortunately, the PUMS data do not allow us to identify people by generational status.

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SIDEPOINT

EDWARD KISSAM, 1995

In Michigan, traditional migration patterns, housing arrangements, and labor force supervision have changed relatively little from the 1960's to the 1990's. The most innovative changes in labor market dynamics stem from the successful efforts of pickle producers to lengthen their growing season by producing pickles in the southern U.S. and to establish a "migrant itenerary" to extend the work season of a core of experienced and favored workers. Successful strategies for decreasing worker turnover and concomitantly reinforcing the "standing waves" of migration patterns have included the provision of improved housing for peak-season migrant workers, reliance on complementary cropping to maintain a relatively steady flow of work and assure that migrants will not leave in search of better opportunities, and structured arrangements to pool labor demand and labor by "lending" workers to neighbors. The "transplantation" of networks of green carder Texans to Florida, at the same time that traditional Texas *troqueros* were evolving into modern farm labor contractors, has made possible southwest Michigan's continued access to ongoing flows of new immigrants to replace departing workers. (pp. 125-126)

Source: Edward Kissam, 1995, "IRCA and Agriculture in Southwest Michigan and Central Washington," Chapter 7 in *Immigration Reform and U.S. Agriculture*, P.L. Martin, W. Huffman, R. Emerson, J.E. Taylor, R.I. Rochin (eds.), University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Publication 3358, 580 pages.